



fact sheet

Office of Adoptions

The Office of Adoptions was created January 1, 1997 to streamline the state's adoption program and to increase the rate of adoptions for children who meet the Department of Human Resources' definition of children with special needs and who are in the state's permanent custody.

At any given time, there are hundreds of children in permanent state custody of the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) due to unresolved family crises. Most of the children come from difficult situations and live in foster homes. If the child is available for adoption, the parents may have volunteered to give up their parental rights, but usually these rights were terminated by the court system due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Many of the children are in the adoptive category of Special Needs.

Children who meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption include any child 8 years of age or older; any child of African-American heritage 1 year of age or older; members of a sibling group of two (2) to be placed together where one is age 8 or over or has another special need as defined herein; any child with a documented physical, psychological or learning disability. Most children in DHR's custody awaiting adoption meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption.

In addition, the Office of Adoptions administers the Adoption Assistance and Post Adoption services for adopted families. In collaboration with the Office of Adoptions, county Departments of Family and Children Services prepare home studies, document cases, approve adoptive homes, prepare children and parents for adoption, and place children in adoptive homes.

Children needing adoption

The majority of the children adopted through the state program were adopted by foster parents, foster/adoptive parents or relatives. Last year (FY 2005), approximately 1,192 adoptions were finalized. There are approximately 250 children in Georgia who are in need of adoptive families. Various child specific recruitment events sponsored through the Office of Adoptions regularly feature this group of waiting children. These events include videoconferences, Wednesday's Child programs, galas, and matching meetings.

Privatization and post adoption services

The Office of Adoptions has increased the role of licensed private agencies in arranging adoptions for children who are in the custody of the state. Other adoption functions such as completing children's life histories, managing the Adoption Reunion Registry, and coordinating the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) and post adoption services have also been privatized. Currently, the Office of Adoptions has 36 contracts with licensed non-profit and for profit agencies. These agencies provide services such as recruiting of foster to adopt and adoption homes, conducting home studies, preparing families to adopt, and supervising adoption placements. The post adoption services programs include but are not limited to: respite care, crisis intervention, support groups for teens, training and support services for parents, and tutoring.

The Office of Adoptions also contracts with My Turn Now, Inc., a non-profit organization, to publish a book of photographs and descriptions of children who are in need of an adoptive home. Furthermore, this agency maintains an electronic photolisting for the Office of

Adoptions' web site and registers children on the national photolisting web site.

Office of Adoptions web site

The Office of Adoptions web site (www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us) features children in the custody of the state who are in need of an adoptive home. In addition to photolisting and/or videostreaming, the site includes a personal profile of each child. In addition, the site provides answers to questions concerning adoption, links to related sites, and highlights upcoming events for the adoption and foster/adopt communities.

For more information on becoming an adoptive parent call: 877-210-KIDS.

Georgia Department of Human Resources

Office of Communications

www.dhr.georgia.gov

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